

Choosing the Right Corporate Training Venue

With the advent, in recent years, of high-tech conference centers boasting amenities seen before only at hotels and resorts, companies are increasingly choosing to conduct their training sessions at off-site locations. However, all venues are not the same, and consequently it has never been more important for companies to choose the right training facility for their corporate training programs.

The right venue for a corporate training program will have all the necessary amenities and conveniences that make it worthwhile to hold training sessions off-site in the first place. Choosing the right location, therefore, means that companies must first identify their needs – for transportation, available space and privacy, technology, and service – and then determine whether their proposed venue has the resources available to meet those needs.

The Decision to Go Off-Site

Moving a training program off-site has always had the advantage of removing employees from the distractions of their usual working environment. This allows them to focus on the material at hand and retain as much of it as possible, without worrying about the phone calls, projects, and deadlines always present in the office. But in the past, this benefit provided by conference centers was always offset by the inconvenience and expense of getting employees to the venue, finding them lodging, and setting up the necessary audio and visual technology – most of which had to be provided by the company itself.

Today, however, many conference centers have the resources to provide all the ingredients of a successful training program, and the staff to see to all the details. Never before have companies had so many options to choose from, and so many conveniences awaiting them – allowing them to focus on training their employees, and not necessarily on the responsibility of producing the training environment itself.

The improvements made by conference centers to enhance the off-site corporate training experience fall into three categories: accommodations, amenities, and technology. Among the very best conference centers, one is likely to find one thousand guest rooms or more – some even have suites available. In many venues, companies will find that the guest rooms adjoin the meeting space, making their employees' stay both comfortable and convenient – and allowing them to easily retire to their rooms in between sessions and refresh themselves before the next meeting.

The amenities available at many conference centers also provide attendees with the opportunity to relax and recharge while not in a training session. A typical high-end site may provide indoor and outdoor recreational and fitness facilities, cafes, lounges, bars plus personal services such as dry cleaning shoe shine, ATM, and even, in some cases, a hair salon. The convenience of having these amenities on site cannot be overstated, since making employees feel at home, by and large, makes them more receptive and attentive throughout the training session.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is the high level and breadth of technological resources and services that the best conference centers provide. Some of the more impressive venues possess technological infrastructures that include high speed wireless internet access, videoconferencing, touch-screen sound systems, built-in computer projection and digital cameras, among other options. Whereas in the past, companies would likely have to rent this

equipment and spend a day setting it up themselves, today they can expect to find this equipment available at their conference center of choice – and, as if that weren't enough, they will have at their disposal professional audio/visual techs to see that everything is set to their specifications and runs smoothly.

Choosing the Right Venue

With such a wealth of resources present at today's best conference centers, it is no wonder that so many companies are choosing to conduct their training programs off-site. But it is nevertheless important that companies choose the best venue for their purposes.

In choosing the best facility, companies must first decide if there is enough space to accommodate the number of employees they expect to attend. This seems like an elementary consideration, but in addition to simply making sure that there are enough seats in the meeting rooms and rooms in the living quarters, one must be sure that there is enough space surrounding those locations to afford the proper degree of privacy. Leaving the distractions of the office behind, only to encounter a new set of distractions at the training facility, minimizes the benefits of going off-site.

Another important factor to consider is service. All the greatest accommodations, amenities, and technology, mean little if a company lacks the proper liaisons to make those features easily available. Particularly, companies should expect to have access to a conference planning manager, who can organize all the details ranging from transportation to meeting locations. Such coordinators are indispensable when planning an off-site training program. Ideally, companies should have a conference planning manager on hand throughout the entire process, from pre-planning to post-event critique.

And, of course, companies should check to see that their facility of choice has the requisite technological materials. Technology changes and improves rapidly, and the best companies change with it. They should, therefore, expect no less from their off-site training destination.

If companies make the best choice available to them for their corporate training venue, they should find that the return on their investment of time and money far outweighs the return they could expect from conducting their training in-house.

For more information on conference centers, and the options available to corporate training planners, please visit the Q Center web site at www.qcenter.com.

About Q Center

Q Center is one of the country's largest conference facilities. It offers 118 meeting venues in more than 150,000 square feet of flexible space for functions ranging in size from two to 2,000 guests. Q Center also provides lodging for more than 1,000 guests as well as dining, abundant recreation, top-flight technology and a host of customized conference services. Its central location -- about 45 miles west of downtown Chicago -- and easy access to both O'Hare International Airport and Midway Airport, make Q Center ideal for local, regional and national meetings.

For further information, please e-mail Communications@QCenter.com